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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter, based on the findings of an indepth study of the social organization of the American high school, provides a new, school-specific way of examining the problem of school crime and violence. The study, which made use of field methodology, addressed two basic questions: "What is the code of rules which makes the high school a social system?" and "How do people learn to play this game?" Data collected enabled researchers to describe four major structural domains of socialization transactions (the teaching-learning structure, the authority-power structure, the peer-group structure, the cross-group structures) and three major processes of social action by which the four structures are operationalized in the social organization (sorting, territoriality, rule making, and rule breaking). It is suggested that this model of the social organization of the American high school, in isolating what is school-specific about crime and violence in schools, may enable educators to develop a means of effectively dealing with the problem. (Author/MLF)

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SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF HIGH SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Based on the findings of an in-depth study of the social organization of the American high school, this paper provides a new, school-specific way of examining the problem of school crime and violence. The study, which made use of field methodology, addressed two basic questions: "What is the code of rules which makes the high school a social system?" and "How do people learn to play this game?" Data collected enabled researchers to describe four major structural domains of socialization transactions (the teaching-learning structure, the authority-power structure, the peer-group structure, the cross-group structures) and three major processes of social action by which the four structures are operationalized in the social organization (sorting, territoriality, rule making, and rule breaking). It is suggested that this model of the social organization of the American high school, in isolating what is school-specific about crime and violence in schools, may enable educators to develop a means of effectively dealing with the problem.

Introduction

Reliance on schooling as the medium for the resolution of social problems has long been a fundamental characteristic of American society. As a result, we are likely to become especially concerned when the schools themselves present problems for society. Sometimes (as in the case of Sputnik, or "Why Johnny Can't Read") we are troubled by the school's failure to fulfill its educating function of providing the technological and cultural literacy we feel is necessary in modern society. The solutions proposed have usually been aimed at improving the effectiveness of schools through curriculum reform or increasing their efficiency through some form of accountability. In other cases we become alarmed because the school seems unable or unwilling to perform its social maintenance function of socializing the young to an understanding and acceptance of social controls. Here, although our solutions are often expressed as curriculum innovations--driver safety programs to reduce auto accidents, drug or sex education when we think drugs and sex pose significant social problems, values clarification in the aftermath of Watergate--they usually represent an attempt to redefine or reaffirm the school's socialization responsibilities within the matrix of social institutions.

The recent escalation of concern over what has variously

been described as violence and vandalism in the schools, school safety, or school crime suffers problems of definition because it seems to fall somewhere in between these two models. Concern with "discipline in schools" has been a traditional problem related to the educational function of schools. Problems of classroom management, lack of interest or attention, and disrespect for teachers or for the rules have always been seen as barriers to effective teaching and efficient learning (Olive, 1956). Such disruptive behavior, however, was not what the National Education Association (1956) seemed to have in mind when it cited newspaper accounts of "juvenile gangsterism, stealing, armed assault and even murder" in the introduction to a poll on "student misbehavior." Neither does it seem to be what was meant in 1977 when the Senate Sub-Committee on Juvenile Delinquency described "violence and vandalism" as "serious, and in some cases, urgent problems in American education" (Sub-Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, 1977). Here the problems are presented in terms of physical safety and even survival rather than in terms of the disruption of the learning function or even the school's failure to socialize youngsters to adequate standards of social control. The school is seen as experiencing and perhaps even producing violent and criminal behavior which does not differ substantially from what happens in the streets

except for the age of the offenders and some of the victims.

It is interesting to speculate which of these definitions respondents had in mind when they answered "lack of discipline" to the Gallup Poll question "What do you see as the most important problem facing the public schools?" in every year since 1969, except in 1971 when it was second to "how to pay for schools" (Gallup, 1973, 1977). Since it was an open-ended question, it seems reasonable to assume that the coders included a wide range of responses, from "classroom misbehavior" to "crime and violence in the schools" in this category. Actually, however, this probably represents a fairly accurate picture of public attitudes, since most people view vandalism, violence, crime, student demonstrations, racial tensions, and student use of drugs and alcohol as related to the failure of the school's socialization function and as demonstrably the result of "lack of discipline" in schools (Gallup, 1971, p. 101). In fact, despite the major themes in research which portray the school as not playing a very distinctive role in juvenile delinquency, but rather as the recipient of forces and problems which children bring with them from the larger larger society, most people are likely to see the school as at least coequal with the family in responsibility for delinquent behavior (Ritterband & Silberstein, 1973).

The confusion we seem to be experiencing in describing, defining, explaining, and correcting the wide range of problems we see as disrupting schools seems to stem from our inability to separate analytically what is "school" and what is "society." This is, of course, not a new problem, nor is it restricted to questions of how to deal with violent and disruptive behavior. But what seems most crucial here is that failing to distinguish between what is school-specific about school crime and what is simply reflective of what is happening in the streets means that we will probably also look to explanations and remediation in what we think we know about crime rather than in what we think we know about schools. As a result, we are likely to view school crime through the same personal ideologies and institutional perspectives which have failed to control crime in the general society.

This is not a plea to leave the problems of school security to school people but, rather, an injunction to remember that violence and disruption in schools do differ from crime in the streets because when they take place in schools, they inevitably affect the schools' learning and socialization functions. This is true not only because violence and crime disrupt the learning process and hinder socialization to societal norms, but because the allocation

of resources to security inevitably depletes the resources available for learning and socialization. The principal of an urban high school, nationally know as a "turnaround school" for dramatically reducing its once disastrously high rate of violence, recently told me that, while he is satisfied that the school is now secure, he is not very proud of the kind of education which is possible with that enforced security. In addition to describing the sense in which the school had become an oppressive, custodial environment, the principal pointed to the very real reductions in educational resources such as having all teachers patrol the halls when not actually teaching and having to let some teachers go in order to hire more security guards.

Viewing school crime within the context of the school is not, however, an easy task. There are boundary problems between the school and the family, the school and the community, and the school and an increasing number of educating systems such as the media, which make it difficult to say where schooling in the formal sense begins and ends. Even if this problem is dealt with, there is an additional one inherent in how researchers have traditionally looked at schools. Most studies of schools have focused on individuals as learners, without much attention to the social organization of learning and how such educating systems intersect with the formal

organization of the school. What research has been done on schools as organizations has come largely from a concern with administration and management and, as a result, is essentially part of the literature on organizational analysis of business and governmental structures. Consequently, while we know something about how children behave as learners and are beginning to get some ideas about how adults organize and manage schools as places to work, we know very little about how schools are organized as social systems. We know even less about the types of social controls which govern the relationships among the school's children, its adults, and its learning and socialization structures and about how they function to promote or hinder learning and regulate the socialization process. It is here that the answers to such questions as (1) the role that schools themselves play in producing, aggravating, or reducing school crime, (2) how the schools mediate between students and poverty, employment, family, the media, and juvenile law enforcement programs, and (3) the ultimate question of whether and how changes in the organization of schools and how they relate to students can remedy the problems we now call school crime.

The Social Organization of High Schools

Since early 1972, a group of anthropologists and educators

with previous experience in studying both educational and criminal justice systems has been developing a model of the social organization of the American high school which we think provides a school-specific focus for examining a number of socioeducational problems, including school crime and violence. Our interest has been in viewing schools as social systems which operate according to an observable code of rules specific to the school, rather than as analogues of other institutional settings, such as business and industry or the family. In the sense that we are using the term rules here, we are describing a control mechanism, one which regulates and regularizes relationships between the school and the outside world as well as those within it. It is this code of rules which keeps the school functioning as an educating and socializing system and structures the ordering of behavior for individual and group safety and security by defining behavior and relationships within these functions. Control systems of this sort start with values which define what is good and what is bad, what is expected and what is condemned. Ultimately, however, learning and social behaviors in the school are guided by specific conventions and rules which operationalize these values and apply them to everyday situations.

Taken as a totality, such conventions and rules form a code of behavior which individuals learn as members of the

social system of the school. The code is manifest and observable in their behavior, since it defines the equation through which they perceive the objective world and make socially acceptable decisions about how to behave. Since we believe that this code is the key to understanding how schools function as social systems, the central question in our research program has been "What is the code of rules which makes the high school a social system and how do people learn to play this game?" By observing, recording, and analyzing these rules, we feel we can describe the high school as a unique socioeducational system.

How We Studied the School

In the first phase of the study (1972-1975), three teams of ethnographers studied three high schools simultaneously, using the same field methods and constantly comparing the data gathered in each of the schools. The three schools cover a rural, suburban, and inner-city-urban continuum in the metropolitan New York-New Jersey area. One is in a small, upstate New York town drawing from a catchment area which includes several small rural townships. It has about 700 students. The second school is in an upper-middle-class New Jersey suburb of New York City, composed chiefly of single-family dwellings occupied by commuting executives and their

families. This school has about 600 students. Both schools have primarily white Protestant, with some some Roman Catholic admixture, student and teacher populations. The third school, located in one of the most polyethnic areas of New York City, has a student population of 4,400 divided among Hispanics, Blacks, Chinese, and a "white" grouping which, while predominantly Italian and Jewish, contains a number of other ethnic and religious groups. There are also subdivisions among each of these major groups, such as Hong-Kong-born as contrasted to American-born or mainland-China-born Chinese and West Indian as contrasted to American Blacks. The teachers in this school are almost all white. In the second phase of the study (1975-1978) our fieldwork has concentrated on the urban school, looking at a number of specific social problems such as desegregation and drug abuse. We have also begun looking at violence and vandalism in a number of similar schools in the New York City area.

The members of each field team lived in the community of the school they studied and were in the schools every day. We have used a variety of participant observation research techniques, but we have also developed some specific techniques during this study. Since we wanted to look at these schools as "free-standing" social systems, we wanted to be as free as possible from traditional paradigms of

school structure and to study the classroom and school milieus as interacting, rather than separate, units of observation and analysis. Eventually, we added the periphery of the school and community as well. We knew from previous experience that interactive behavior sometimes starts in the classroom and then flows out into the halls and even outside the school itself, as well as moving from outside in, and we wanted to follow that flow of action wherever it led.

We decided that we would select "events" in the schools as the units of observation and analysis (again, rather than "classrooms" or "teacher-student interactions"), since they are spontaneous and not logically deduced from what we already knew about the organizational structure of high schools. Throughout the study we have observed, recorded, and analyzed both those recurrent events which regularize the daily life of the schools and those unpredictable events which disrupt that regularity and sometimes change the course of activity to such an extent that they lead to new regularities. We followed such events--ranging from routine activities, such as taking attendance, to more dramatic ones, such as a shoot-out in the cafeteria of the urban school--wherever they led. We identified the network of individuals who were involved in each event and then interviewed them in an attempt to

understand the event as a function of the perceptions and interactions of the people who shared in it, as well as from our own observation of what was happening. These interviews could then be "plotted" in a network to indicate (1) who did what, when, and where, (2) who were the actors and who the observers in the event and the roles that they played, and (3) where conflicting perceptions of the same event indicated differences in perceptions among classes of participants, what were the characteristics of those classes. At a later stage of the research (1975), we also added a number of life histories of students and teachers to provide some longitudinal comparison on how recurrent events structured their lives and how unpredictable events affected the regularities of the school cycle.

A Social Organization Model of the High School

From the analyses of our field notes on the three high schools we studied, we constructed a model of the social organization (those patterns of behavior through which people relate) of the high school. Our model assumes that the high school's major functions are organized into four major structural domains. Each structure organizes a distinctive area of enculturation and socialization which, following Herskovits, we see as different processes

(Herskovits, 1948, pp. 326-327). Learning and adaptation take place through both enculturation and socialization, but the source of what is learned and the learning process differs in each. We prefer to use the concept of enculturation to describe the process of cultural conditioning through which individuals are expected to learn socially standardized responses to cultural stimuli. Essentially, it is a one-way process of cultural transmission through which the school attempts to fulfill its role of producing culturally competent individuals. Socialization, on the other hand, we see as transactional and as describing the process by which the individual--adult as well as child--is integrated into the social organization of the specific school/community under examination.

Structures

Each structure describes a different area of enculturation and a specific pattern of socialization for adults as well as children:

The Teaching-Learning Structure. This domain organizes the enculturation of cognitive and affective skills which define the learning function of the school. Since we are looking at socialization as transactional, this structure includes the interaction patterns for customary social

relations through which teachers are socialized to the learning style valued by the school and to the way the school defines the role of the child in relation to the learning function. When we describe a school as being academically oriented or achievement-oriented, as contrasted to a school which lacks that orientation, we are describing the teaching-learning structure and the roles teachers and students are expected to fill in it.

The Authority-Power Structure. This domain organizes the enculturation of the discipline, authority, and power of adults and of such adult-controlled institutional complexes as government, the world of work, and so on. Socialization within this structure is organized by compulsory attendance laws, by age-grading aspects of both the student and adult populations of the school, by the governance process within the school and the classroom, and by the quasi-governmental auspices of the school-community relationship in which the sanctions for prescriptive and proscriptive rules for teachers and students and the resources and patterns of allocation come from outside the school itself. When we describe a school as "in control"--as contrasted to one which is chaotic, or "out of control"--we are looking at the authority-power relationships observable in this structure. The notion of a "turnaround school"

really describes one in which the authority-power structure has been reestablished or reinforced.

The Peer-Group Structure. This domain organizes the the enculturation of culturally sanctioned group values and modes of behavior in the two distinct peer groups in the high school, the children and the adults. The values and behaviors particular to each of these peer groups are, to some extent, generation-bound, but they are also different because they take place within the school. Peer group socialization involves "learning to get along with each other" among teachers as well as among students, but it also involves learning roles, establishing patterns of conflict and agreement, and the variety of ways in which individuals in the two networks define values and set behavioral expectations. Differences in these definitions are more than the so-called generation gap; they also are affected by differences in ethnicity and social class between the adult and student populations in a school.

Cross-Group Structures. This domain organizes the enculturation of behavior codes for interaction between the two peer groups, including definitions of mediator roles and communication styles. Socialization within this area defines how teachers relate to students and how students relate to teachers; it considers the relative rights and

responsibilities of each, and it includes some of the concerns expressed in school safety, such as student respect for the authority of the teacher, how it is to be expressed, and how teachers relate to their students. Of considerable importance, but often ignored, is the process of mediation between the two networks. Mediator roles can be quite formal, as in the counseling function or the appointment of students to governance committees. Many unformalized roles, however, emerge in the pattern of relationships established in the schools. The role of coach, for example, is a mediating role which does not follow the traditional teacher-student role set, and the special relationships between teacher-advisers or special interest clubs (such as an art or music or chess club) are also different. Of particular interest is the mediating relationship established by co-ethnicity, particularly in a school which has a majority of Black or Hispanic or other minority youngsters and very few teachers from the same group. In considering questions of school safety, there is also the relationship of students and teachers to the custodial staff, security guards, cafeteria workers, and so on, who, in many urban areas at least, often tend to approximate the ethnic and social class background of the students more closely than that of teachers.

Process

Each of these structures also has a characteristic process associated with it. The structure, as we have seen, is actually a network of relationships among individuals which is determined by legal, administrative, group, and individual decisions. The process comprises the patterns of behavior which channel or mold behavior and communications among these individuals. Teachers, for example, usually talk differently to each other than they do to students. But they also talk differently when they are performing their role within the teaching-learning structure than they do when they are within the authority-power structure. Students also behave differently in the different structures.

In our research so far, we have identified three major processes of social action by which the four structures are operationalized in the social organization of the day-to-day life of a school. These processes adjust the structures to changing demographic, political, social, and economic conditions. These processes appeared with such regularity and so obviously in each of the schools we have studied that we believe they are basic to organizing social interaction within and across all four major structures in all schools.

Sorting. This is the process in which individuals classify themselves and each other according to a set of culturally defined labels in each school. While the specific labels may, and often do, differ from school to school, the process of sorting is fundamental in every school in defining the pattern of social relationships. Students sort each other and are sorted by teachers and administrators. The fact that there may be a discrepancy between the sorting labels used by students and those used by the adults can be at the heart of some of the tension and conflicts which are of concern in school safety. Changes in the sorting process over time may indicate positive or negative interpretations of the teaching-learning or authority-power structures by modifying the pattern of social contact and relations within a particular school. A "turnaround school" we have recently studied, for example, which at one time had a predominantly white student and teacher population, underwent a rapid and steady decline in both academic and disciplinary characteristics over a five-year period during which an increasing number of Black and Hispanic children entered the school as the neighborhood changed. The teachers and administrators in the school, still the same white group from the earlier period, attributed the change to the influx of Black and Hispanic children who were seen

(sorted) as uneducable and violent. When a new, community-selected principal sought out able Black and Hispanic children from throughout his district and arranged for them to transfer to this school, he changed the mix of students in the school with some obvious effects on the sorting process. The teachers were manifestly impressed by the new students, and "Black" and "Hispanic" were no longer automatically equated with "uneducable and violent." The change in the sorting process also had an effect on the student peer group structure--since ethnicity no longer served as the only basis for clique formation, cross-ethnic cliques based on mutual interest began to form.

Territoriality. This process includes the formal and informal assignment of space within the school, access or the denial of it to particular groups within the school, and the effects of particular environments (the classroom as contrasted to the cafeteria, for example) on behavior. Size of school is also related to territoriality. We found, for example, that the urban school in our study, which was far larger than the suburban or rural school, was a qualitatively different social environment as much as a result of its size as of its urban location. Within the urban high school, however, we also found that when the population of the school decreased from 5,500 to 4,400, the

"crowding factor," which can be a cause of tensions in schools, was considerably reduced.

Rule Making and Rule Breaking. Finally, the process of rule making and rule breaking serves as another means of organizing behavior within the four major structures and on their interfaces. In schools there is a continual proliferation of rules. This proliferation may vary in rate or in sponsoring individuals, but schools are seldom without it. There is also, however, differential enforcement of rules. The differences may be between categories (such as teacher and student), between different individual enforcers or offenders, over time, and between different places. All the component factors which cause rules to be made and to be enforced in particular situations provide indicators of the social organization of the school.

The "Charter"

Collectively, these processes, which mold and channel behavior within the four structures we have identified, are expressed in the form of behavioral expectations or conventions which set the limits for approved behavior in the school. We have come to call this loose collection of understandings the "charter" of the school. By charter, we mean a charter for action, a set of shared understandings

which is understood by all members of the school community and which limits the degree of variability of behavior permissible for individual actors (the price they pay for group membership). It is this charter which functions as the formal component in what is usually considered the informal system of social organization in the high school. A teacher will allow a certain amount of freedom for individual student behavior in the classroom before invoking the charter to describe (and sanction) the expected behavior for a student in the teaching-learning structure or in the authority-power sturcture or, in some cases, in both. Similarly, the principal will allow variability in teacher behavior until the variation exceeds the limits established by the charter's definition of teacher behavior before he invokes the charter. Invoking the charter, by the way, is used just as frequently (and possibly more frequently) by a lower (in the hierarchy) person or group to a higher person or group as a means of redressing some perceived wrong which exceeds the limits established by the charter. Also, our experience in the the three high schools we studied confirms McPherson's (1972) earlier findings that, in the school she studied, adults (both teachers and administrators) were usually reluctant to make decisions and absolute rules which might

set a pattern of enforcement. This reluctance to impose specific rules means that much of the daily life of the school proceeds from the shared understandings of the charter, rather than from specific rules. The process of invoking the charter comes to represent the major social control mechanism within the school. Figure 1 (on the following page) displays the relationship among the four major structures; the process of sorting, territoriality, and rule making and rule breaking; and the school charter.

School Crime and the Social Organization Model

We believe that this model offers a means of looking at school crime and violence within the context of the school by providing a means of isolating what is school-specific from more general societal factors. In some of the schools we have studied recently, we found that the school was more physically secure than was the surrounding neighborhood. In fact, in one such school, parents told us that they felt at ease while their children were in school and were only concerned when the children were traveling to and from school. What is important here is our observation that the assumption that violent communities produce violent schools does not take into account the fact that school climate and community climate do not always

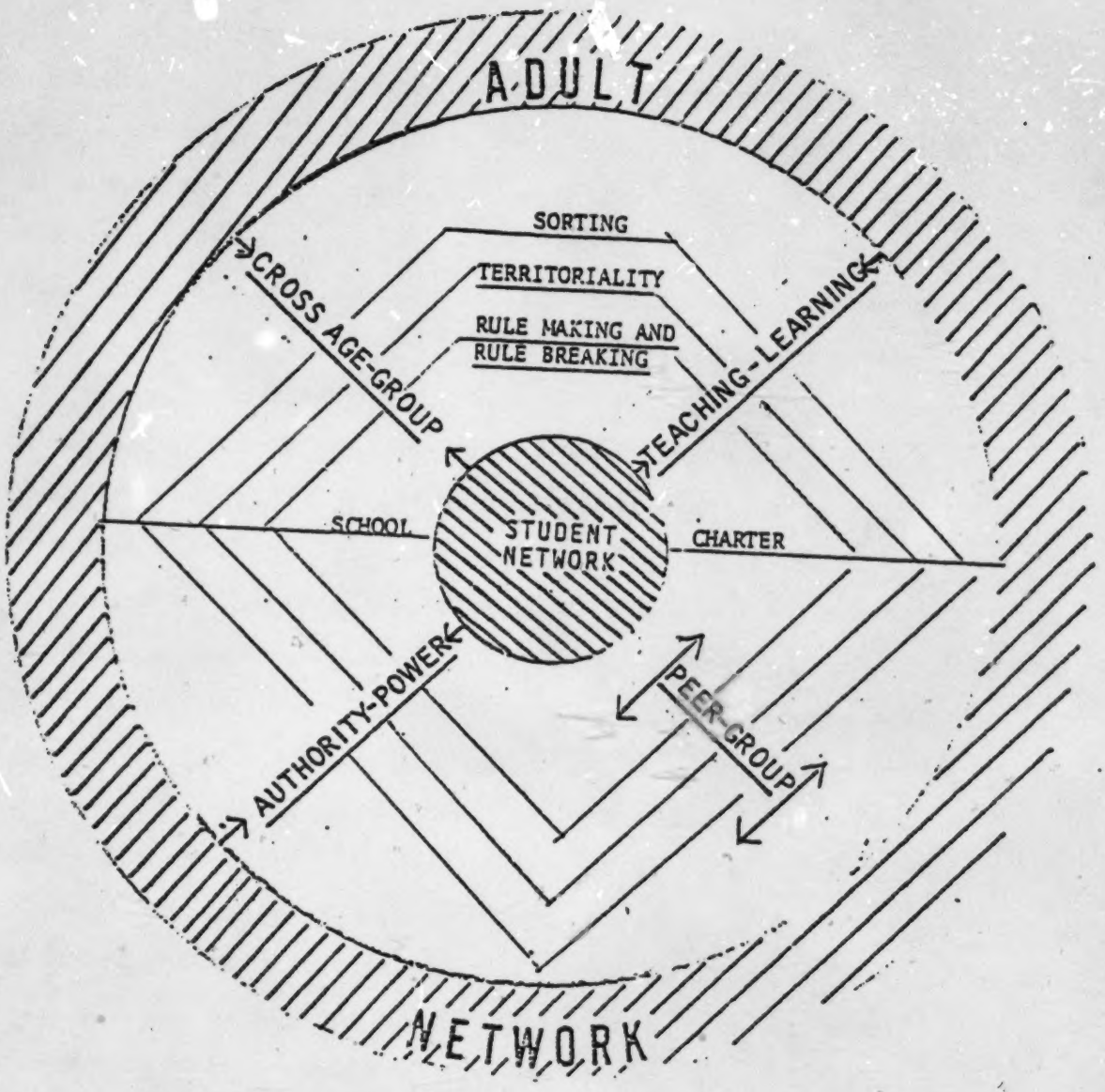

Figure 1. Enculturation and socialization in schools: structure and process.

coincide. In the three high schools we studied, for example, violent crimes--assaults, extortion with threats of physical harm, knifings, and shootings--were significantly more frequent than in either the suburban or the rural school. When we first examined these data, we assumed that this confirmed the widespread notion that, since schools draw their populations from the community, crime levels in the community are reflected in the school. Later examination, however, revealed that most of the violence occurred in the community, rather than in the school itself. Although there was more violence in the urban high school than in the rural and suburban ones, there was less violence in the urban school than in its community, and this was true even of violence and crimes by and against high-school students.

There are a number of possible explanations for this. One is that youth spend more time in the community than in the school; another is that there is more likelihood that crimes committed in the community will be reported to the police. We think, however, that the difference is due to the ordering of relationships and the social control which are found in schools. Thus, when we compared the three high schools, we found that variations in school crime and discipline were more responsive to changes in the social organization of the school than could be accounted for by

variations in the characteristics of the communities. Certainly, the community is a major determinant of the social organization of a particular school, but we found that the patterns of relationships which the school empowered through that social organization could, and did, intervene to structure individual and collective behavior. This was true of all three processes--sorting, territoriality, and the making and breaking of rules.

Sorting was found to be a process present in all the schools we studied, but the bases for sorting differed in each school.

In the rural school, which is a consolidated high school drawing students from a number of rural townships, students are sorted according to the township from which they come. Students from "Greenville," for example, are considered "hell-raisers," while students from "Orange Township" are described as "well-behaved and serious students." In the urban school, which like all New York City high schools draws students from a number of different sections of the city, where one lives in the community is not a major basis for sorting. What is important is ethnicity. Blacks are sorted by teachers as being potentially violent and teachers will often ignore charter violations or even obvious rule violations as a means of avoiding confrontations. Hispanics

are also considered potentially violent but here the subgroupings become important. Puerto Ricans are described as "highly verbal, even loquacious" to the point that teachers characterize their style as "talking you to death." Dominicans, on the other hand, are considered "irrationally violent" and, like Blacks, to be avoided. Interestingly, school personnel attribute this difference to cultural differences in students' attitudes toward politics and schooling in the Dominican Republic as contrasted to Puerto Rico and to the greater similarity between Puerto Rican and mainland United States schools. They will also point out that this is, in their opinion, school-specific and that the Dominican communities in New York City are no more violent than Puerto Rican communities. Of all the groups in the school, the Chinese are considered to be the best disciplined as well as the best students. Here again, however, students from Hong Kong are considered to be better students than mainland Chinese because "their schools are more like ours." In the suburban school, where students are ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous, neither community of origin nor ethnicity are available bases for sorting. Here students are sorted into two major groupings: "jocks," school-spirit-oriented students, and "freaks," those who are considered socially

deviant from that spirit. School officials maintain that the "freaks" are much more likely to become involved in problems of discipline and violate drug laws more frequently than do "jocks".

Whether ethnicity, community of origin, or other bases are used for sorting individuals into categories of "violence-prone," "discipline problems," or any of the other labels which denote deviance, there are school-specific problems associated with sorting. One obvious one is that if it is true, as labeling theorists tell us, that labels of this sort communicate these expectations of behavior to the individual or group so labeled, problems of discipline and crime may be intensified, if not actually created by sorting (Becker, 1963; Schur, 1971). A more certain educational problem, however, is that all three of the schools we studied, despite their public posture to the contrary, use these sorting categories as the basis for placing students in the teaching-learning structure as well as in the authority-power structure. This has important implications for social action programs such as desegregation which attempt to change the mix of students in a school, but it also has an important bearing on school crime and discipline. Black students in the urban high school, for example, not only lose out on the socialization functions

of the school because they are sorted as potentially violent and so are ignored rather than corrected when they violate the school charter; they also lose out on the enculturation function by being tracked into programs which do little to produce cultural competence. The potential for violence and crime in this double bind is obvious. Yet the school, more easily than the community or the society in general, can adjust its sorting process to correct such problems because it does control the teaching-learning structure.

Territoriality in schools also affects school safety within the context of the school. We found, as others have, that the anonymity provided by the very large size of the urban school was an obvious factor in the significantly higher rates of misbehavior and actual crimes there as compared to the much smaller rural and suburban schools (Barker & Gump, 1964). Conversely, we found that in both the rural and suburban schools, teachers reported that they knew most of the students and so could immediately recognize misbehaving students, and, even more important, they said, the students knew that they would be recognized. There is, however, a more positive aspect of the relationship between school size and school safety. Integration into the activities and programs of the school are more easily accomplished in smaller rural and suburban

schools not only because of the more personalized nature of the adult-child relationships in the cross-age-group structure, but because the peer structure itself provides greater opportunities for informal relations as well. The sheer physical size of the large urban school made it impossible for students to relate to it as a totality. As a result, student groups, sorted by ethnicity, established control over particular stairwells in the school and even over "turfs" on the sidewalks outside the school in much the same manner as prisoners set up "courts," or territories, in prison yards (Ianni, 1976). These territorial claims not only reduce interaction among ethnic groups but provide a source of potential conflict and violence as well. Yet these stairwells and turfs which are claimed as territories by particular groups are, like the student bathrooms, not a locus of violence. Crimes do take place there, but they tend to be victimless crimes, such as drug use or selling, rather than violence which would bring "heat" and jeopardize the availability of the student-controlled space.

Finally, the making and breaking of rules is one of the most powerful examples of the importance of looking at school-specific factors in crime and violence in designing responses to the problem of school safety. In all three

schools, we found that the order or social control exercised by the administration--particularly in the person of the principal--was a major factor in the level of crime and violence in the school. Specifically, we found that the less ambiguity in the authority-power structure in terms of allowing some groups or individuals under some circumstances or at some times to violate some rules or to ignore the limits set by the charter, the greater the sense of order and control in the school. In the urban school, for example, the principal has spent the last five years bringing order to a once chaotic school through applying uncompromising social control over student and, as much as possible, teacher behavior. The school is now "in control" and is considered a "turnaround school" by the central board officals. Again, however, there is the question of the price paid in the teaching-learning structure for the control and order established in the authority-power structure. Teachers and administrators are quick to point out that the costs of misbehavior and violence in a school are great enough to warrant the price. Again, however, they also indicate their concern over the custodial nature of their role and the lack of opportunities to teach.

While sorting, territoriality, and the making

and breaking of rules are individually related to the problems of violence and crime in school-specific terms, they do not operate in isolation from each other. Any event in the school is likely to relate the three to each other. Consider this section from the field notes of the ethnographer who spent several months observing and interviewing on the sidewalks of the urban school (Mavros, 1975):

> The youths (two of them) looked as though they were ready to exchange blows. At this point someone in the crowd remarked, hey, you can't have a fight out here on the street. There's not enough room. They will be too much trouble. So let's go over to the playground. A number of students murmured their agreement with this suggestion. With no further hesitation, followed by the crowd, they began to head toward the playground. I followed the movement of the crowd, lingering toward the rear. I noted that numerous blacks and orientals were among the students who were observing this altercation. They did not seem to be among the persons toward the middle or center of the crowd. However, they did, judging by their comments, appear to be quite interested in what was going on. As we walked toward the playground, a couple of Hispanic youths stood on the street and shouted out, joints here. Get your loose joints. Get your joints before you go to the show. Don't be caught without. Don't go empty handed. Get your loose joints right here. Some laughed as they heard the sales pitch being made. Others said that they wanted to know how good was their credit. The movement to the playground had some characteristics of a circus. I asked two oriental males and two Hispanic males what the fight was all about. They said that they did not know. I asked them why they were coming

to see the fight. They said these things happen every now and then and that they're good to talk about afterwards. The procession of students took about five minutes to walk over to the playground and squeeze inside the fence that surrounded it. A larger crowd had gathered. It must have numbered about 130 persons. Ray appeared to be going over the previous remarks that had been made on Grand with the youth he was confronting. Another youth stepped up beside the first and took off his jacket. It looked to me as though he was going to get involved in any action if there was a fight. I then noticed that Paco was close to Ray and doing a lot of talking. Within a couple of minutes, Paco had hurriedly thrown off his three quarter length coat and unbuttoned his shirt, tossing them both to the ground. He looked as though he was ready to begin fighting the youth named George. At about this point, two men among the crowd called out loudly, all right fellas. Now break this up. This is enough. You can't fight here. Paco appeared to be trying to swing at George. One of the men who had called out grabbed ahold of Paco, keeping him away from George. The other man called out louder and with more vehemence. I heard the sound of a whistle. It was a long, not very loud or shrill noise coming from someone nearby. I turned to see a man with a leg in a steel brace blowing with what appeared to be great energy into a whistle.

The youths who were about to fight were Puerto Rican, and, after beginning to argue in the school, they moved to an area outside the school which is part of the territory claimed by Hispanics and informally assigned to them by other groups. By moving outside the school, the youths were also distancing themselves from the authority-power structure of the school. Once outside the school,

however, their confrontation attracted others and, as the crowd grew, it was decided to move completely outside the authority-power structure by moving into a playground area which is off school property. By now the whole affair was beginning to take on almost a carnival atmosphere, with offers of drugs for sale and everyone, including the school security guards, who were watching from nearby, expecting to see a "show." Later interviewing indicated that this was being viewed by everyone as "a Hispanic thing" and that the other, non-Hispanic youths who surrounded the protagonists were observers rather than even potential participants. Just a few weeks befor this event, however, there had been a major confrontation between Dominican and Chinese students very close to the area in which this confrontation was taking place. In that case, the school authorities had intervened immediately, partly because Dominicans are considered violent, but, even more important, because it involved two different ethnic groups and so was "potentially explosive." But here, with the two Hispanic youths and even with the larger group of co-ethnics surrounding them, the school guards did not intervene until the crowd became polyethnic, at which point the school security personnel went into the playground and dispersed the crowd. In our terms, what they were

doing was extending the authority-power structure of the school into the community by invoking the charter to cover an event for which there were no rules.

Schools--at least the three high schools we studied--do play a distinctive role in the problem of school crime which is demonstrably different from those of the family, the community, and the larger society. Leaving aside the question of the relative importance of the school, as contrasted to other social institutions, as the source of school violence and crime, there seems little question that violence and crime present unique problems when they take place in schools. For one thing, the fact that they do take place in schools means that, in addition to their human and property costs, they inevitably disrupt the schools' learning functions, both directly and because the resources assigned to making schools "safe" deplete those intended to make schools effective organizations for providing cultural competence to young people. At the same time, since the school also serves as a medium of socialization for youngsters, the effects of school crime and violence have a lasting effect on youth, which can spread outward from the school over time as well as space.

If there is insufficient evidence to argue the

question of the relative role of the school in causing or aggravating its own problems with disruption and crime, there is even less to support an answer to the question of whether schools can be left to deal with the problems in their own way. Certainly, the traditional reliance on the schools as the medium for the resolution of all social problems is no longer tenable. But answers to both sets of questions require that we separate school-specific factors from those which could occur in any sector of society. We may never be able to "teach" solutions to the problems of school safety as part of the school's curriculum. We can, however, introduce changes in the social organization of schools by changing the way in which students are sorted, adjusting territoriality by attending to such matters as school size and design, and reexamining the ways in which rules are made and enforced in schools. Such changes have the advantage of being manageable for schools, since they are possible within the schools' own span of control and do not require drastic societal adjustments. They have the added advantage of not having been tried before and so not bearing the burden of having failed elsewhere.

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